



NEWS BUREAU  
SAINT JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

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SUBJECT: PRECIOUS BLOOD SOCIETY CARRIES ON AFTER FATHER BRUNNER'S DEATH

(Second in a series of two articles)

RENSSELAER, Ind. -- Father Francis Brunner might be regarded as the second founder of the Society of the Precious Blood, at least from an American perspective, but the Society was left to carry on without him after 1859, the year of his death.

After his death, the Society of the Precious Blood, or more precisely, its priest members, elected a new superior who commonly came to be called a "provincial," although technically the entire group was still under the direct authority of the superior in Rome.

In the years between 1859 and 1889 (when the college was begun) conditions had changed, but not a lot. The number of priests had grown to 80, and the lay brothers numbered only slightly more. The sisters, who had grown to more than 400, were formally separated into a religious order of their own in 1887. Nine of the ten convents still existed very largely in the form in which Father Brunner had founded them, isolated from the outside world; the members were dedicated mostly to a life of silence, work, and prayer.

Only the size and quality of the buildings had grown, and some of the sisters had gone into teaching in parochial schools. Most of the priests were still living in these monasteries and most of them functioned as pastors, in fact at least if not in name. But the priests and brothers, however, had meanwhile established two institutions entirely separate from those of the sisters: St. Charles Seminary at

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Carthagen, Ohio, in 1861, which became also the headquarters of the Society, and in 1884 another house was begun nearby at Burkettsville, Ohio, for the training of the brothers.

The above constitutes roughly the context in which Saint Joseph's College was founded. It is not surprising then that the college, too, at first looked very much like a monastery. Bishop Dwenger had endowed it with 320 acres of land, which the brothers operated to help support the school. The priests in this case, however, devoted themselves more to teaching than to parochial work, although the latter was also done.

About a dozen Precious Blood Sisters also came to the college to staff the kitchen and the laundry and do some gardening. Yet the very fact that the Society of the Precious Blood established a college at all was indicative of change.

First, there was a need for a school to train young men for entry into seminaries, both in the Society and for the Fort Wayne diocese. In other words, a better education was being required for the priests. At the same time, the children of immigrants were at the point of desiring a high school education.

It was still a time when the Catholic Church felt it necessary that children attend a parochial school to protect their faith in predominantly Protestant-controlled public schools, and now there was need for a Catholic education beyond the grade school. Consequently, Saint Joseph's also offered a high school program in its academy from the very beginning. But it still kept much of the monastic character inherited from Father Brunner. It was still a "monastery" in a rural area totally segregated from outside influences and tried to be as self-sustaining as possible.

Board and tuition (\$75 a semester if paid in advance) per semester



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could be kept low because of the farm and donated services of its people. Authority was paternalistic, as symbolized in Father Seifert's term as president, and discipline was severe.

As with all institutions, they are a product of their times, but they must also change with the times if they are to survive. Thus Saint Joseph's today would be totally unrecognizable to a student of 1891, if he could return to see it. Obviously, even the original building that housed the college was destroyed by fire in 1973. The only mark left that an 1891 student would remotely recognize would be the reflecting pool, and even that has been cemented long since.

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